

## **Terms of Reference**

**Title: VCSE Brokerage Framework Assurance Panel**  
Sept 2024

### **1 Introduction**

The BNSSG VCSE Brokerage Framework is a new system-wide approach to enable a diverse range of VCSE organisations to deliver health and wellbeing improvements in local communities, through investment from Integrated Care System (ICS) health and social care partners.

The Framework provides a standard, robust and inclusive process for assessing the best proposals for community activities. It is being piloted in 2024, with an anticipated full launch in 2025.

To develop proposals for the pilot programmes, VCSE organisations need to join the Framework. Any eligible VCSE organisation can apply to join the Framework if they have been in operation for more than 12 months, and meet the Framework's five criteria and Quality Assurance requirements, as set out on the [Brokerage webpage](#).

This document sets out the purpose, structure, roles, expectations and responsibilities of the VCSE Brokerage Framework Assurance Panel, as well as the process for communicating and appealing decisions made.

In the short term, the Brokerage Framework Check-and-Challenge group will play the role of the VCSE Brokerage Framework Assurance Panel through its initial meetings in September and October. In this interim phase, the VCSE Brokerage Framework Assurance Panel will be tested and this Terms of Reference will evolve as necessary.

### **2 Purpose and role**

The purpose of the VCSE Brokerage Framework Assurance Panel is to ensure that organisations on the Framework meet the quality assurance requirements and criteria for joining.

The VCSE Brokerage Framework Assurance Panel has oversight of the assessment of applications to the Framework and plays the lead role in the quality assurance decision-making process.

### 3 Structure and decision-making

The VCSE Brokerage Framework Assurance Panel will meet monthly to review and make decisions about applications to join the Framework.

The Brokerage Team is responsible for organising and preparing panel meetings and providing the necessary information to support the panel's assessment of applications and decision-making on quality assurance documentation. Meetings will take place online, with papers circulated one week in advance.

Members will be expected to review the papers ahead of the monthly meetings and come to the meeting prepared to discuss and make decisions as a group. There will need to be at least 4 panel members – 2 VCSE and 2 public sector - present to act as the quorum for decision-making.

Current members of the VCSE Brokerage Framework Assurance Panel are:

- 4 VCSE Alliance Ambassadors – from BNSSG VCSE organisations that serve communities of place, practice and identity
  - Mark Graham (CEO, For All Healthy Living Centre)
  - Mark Coates (CEO, Creative Youth Network)
  - Mandy Gardner (CEO, VANS)
  - Julie Matthews (Director & Strategic Development Lead for Creative Health, Creative Shift)
- 1 VCSE Lead Locality partner
  - Anya Mulcahy-Bowman (Deputy CEO, Wellspring Settlement)
- 1 ICB Locality Partnership officer (from a locality different to the VCSE Lead Locality)
  - Sharron Norman (Chair, North & West Bristol Locality Partnership)
- ICB VCSE Lead (chair)
  - Mark Hubbard
- VCSE Brokerage Manager
  - Karen Hurley

Local authority representatives will participate in the assurance panel as advisors and will not have decision making responsibility.

VCSE Brokerage Framework Assurance Panel members will be required to comply with the ICB conflict of interest policy. All members will need to complete the ICB conflict of interest form prior to receiving any information regarding applications, or participating in the assurance panel. Assurance panel members will be offered training if required (through ICB's ConsultOD, Conflict of Interest course).

## 4 Expectations and principles

- **Equality and Equity:** Striving to be equitable, ensuring the VCSE Brokerage Framework is inclusive and accessible. Ensuring everyone has an opportunity and considering additional needs.
- **Transparency, honesty and openness:** Maintaining transparency in our practices and decisions, acknowledging when things don't go smoothly, and learning from mistakes.
- **Trust and Respect:** Cultivating trust, considering power dynamics, and maintaining mutual respect and agreed boundaries. Ensuring confidentiality is maintained and information is not shared with anyone or used for any other purposes than the panel.
- **Focus, commitment and accountability:** Ensuring the VCSE Brokerage Framework has a clarity of purpose, a shared vision, solid processes, and strong decision-making processes, while remaining flexible and responsive to feedback.
- **Excellent communication:** Communicating in diverse, consistent, and accessible ways.

## 5 Role and responsibilities

The Brokerage Team will undertake an initial assessment of applications and quality assurance documentation. The role and responsibilities of the VCSE Brokerage Framework Assurance Panel within the assessment and Quality Assurance process are set out below.

### 5.1 Assessment and Quality Assurance process

Organisations apply to join the Framework by completing an online form and submitting the relevant documents.

Upon receipt of an application, the Brokerage Team will:

- a) check the form is fully completed and
- b) check the Quality Assurance requirements have been submitted.

If either the form or the Quality Assurance documentation is incomplete, then the Brokerage Team will respond to the applicant organisation with a request for the missing information.

When the form is fully completed and all related Quality Assurance documentation has been received, the Brokerage Team will assess the Quality Assurance documentation and make one of the following recommendations to the panel about the application:

- a) accepted onto the Framework, subject to review by the VCSE Brokerage Framework Assurance Panel.

- b) provisionally accepted with conditions (e.g. revised EDI policy), subject to discussion with the VCSE Brokerage Framework Assurance Panel.
- c) not accepted onto the Framework at this time, subject to review by the VCSE Brokerage Framework Assurance Panel.
- d) for discussion with the VCSE Brokerage Framework Assurance Panel as there are queries / questions about whether the application meets the criteria and/or quality assurance requirements.

The VCSE Brokerage Framework Assurance Panel will only receive applications for discussion and decision once the Brokerage Team has made its initial recommendation. The VCSE Brokerage Framework Assurance Panel will be informed of other applications in progress.

## 5.2 Expected areas of expertise and insight required from Assurance Panel

Most of the criteria to join the Framework and Quality Assurance documentation require a binary yes/no response from applicants. In these cases, the Brokerage Team will be able to make a straightforward assessment as to whether an organisation is eligible. However, there are some elements of the criteria and Quality Assurance requirements that may require additional insight and discussion. It is on these elements that the VCSE Brokerage Framework Assurance Panel members will be expected to discuss and take a view.

Expected role of VCSE Brokerage Framework Assurance Panel members:

- Note the recommendation by the Brokerage team as to whether the organisation has met the objective eligibility criteria
- Review and confirm the suitability and quality of core requirement policies (EDI policy, safeguarding policy and complaints procedure)
  - Review policies in advance of meetings against guidance/checklist provided
  - Collective decision at meeting to either confirm suitability of the policies or identify areas of required development (conditions) to meet the Framework requirements.
- Review and decide whether variance on other required criteria is acceptable to meet the Framework requirements. Examples:
  - An organisation can supply an annual report, but only for 2022 not 2023/24.
  - Governing document is a work-in-progress
- Confirm decision on application:
  - Accepted onto the Framework
  - Accepted onto the Framework with conditions
  - Not accepted onto the Framework

## **6 Informing applicants of the Panel's decision**

Once the assessment process is complete, the Brokerage Team will have responsibility for responding to the applicant to tell them of the outcome. This will be done as soon as possible after the VCSE Brokerage Framework Assurance Panel meeting.

If an organisation does meet the requirements of the Brokerage Framework, they will be sent an email from the Brokerage Team that:

- congratulates the organisation on joining the Framework
- provides details about how the Brokerage Team will promote opportunities amongst participants, how participants can respond, and opportunities for communication and relationship building with other members and
- requests confirmation of their commitment to the Framework through the signing of a VCSE Brokerage Framework Agreement. The agreement is currently in development and will be shared with organisations to sign in due course.

If an organisation does not meet the requirements of the Brokerage Framework, they will be sent a notification by email by the Brokerage Team inviting them to get in touch to receive information about why and recommendations for how they could meet the Framework requirements.

The email may also include signposting to relevant capacity-building support and guidance within the VCSE sector.

In addition, organisations will be encouraged to join the VCSE Alliance to ensure they receive all ICS-VCSE information.

## **7 Appeals process**

The ICB has overall responsibility for the governance of the VCSE Brokerage Framework, with a direct reporting line into the Community Health and Care Improvement Group (HCIG).

If an applicant is not accepted onto the Framework following a VCSE Brokerage Framework Assurance Panel meeting, they should initially contact the Brokerage Team for advice and support.

Following this support and if the matter remains unresolved, an appeal against a decision not to be accepted onto the Framework, can be made via the ICB management line reporting into Community HCIG.

## **8 Review**

This Terms of Reference will be used during the test and learn period, when the VCSE Brokerage Framework Assurance Panel operations will be carried out by the VCSE Brokerage Check and Challenge Group. The test and learn period is anticipated to end in Spring 2025. The intention is that the VCSE Brokerage Framework will then become business as usual in 2025, subject to being able to demonstrate effectiveness. The Terms of Reference will be reviewed at that time to reflect learning and development over the period of the pilot phase.